

History

The Nez Perce and Salish used Pattee Canyon on their way to the plains to hunt buffalo. They called it "*Es nin paks*" which means "crooked trail". They used it as a detour to avoid ambush by Blackfeet warriors in Hellgate Canyon, which is just north of Pattee Canyon.

Pattee Canyon got its name from David Pattee, who filed a homestead claim in 1871 for land near the mouth of the canyon. He came to the Bitterroot Valley in 1856 from New Hampshire to rebuild saw- and grist- mills owned by Major John Owen (for whom Fort Owen State Monument at Stevensville is named). He was active in several local businesses, but sold out and moved to Tacoma, Washington in 1878.

In 1877, the U.S. Army started building Fort Missoula. Since some of the biggest trees in the area grew in Pattee Canyon, a 1600-acre timber reserve was set aside here to supply the fort. The old timber reserve was the basis of the present day recreation area. In the 1920's the Army built a rifle range in the meadow near the present day picnic area. The range was closed in 1945, but you can still see the earthen backstop and concrete foundations.

The Forest Service acquired the timber reserve in 1926. Subsequent land acquisitions have added to the original acquisition. Today, a combination of Forest Service, State, City of Missoula and University lands provide non-motorized public trail access from the city to the picnic area.

Facilities

At the picnic area you'll find tables, fire rings, toilets (some handicapped accessible), parking and group picnic facilities, but no running water, electricity or overnight camping. An 18-hole Frisbee golf (folf) course is located just north of the picnic area and is open in the summer.

Three group picnic sites have large tables, grills and parking lots that can accommodate 50 to 200 people. Group sites are available by reservation only. Please contact the Missoula Ranger District at (406) 329-3814 for more information. The picnic area gate is open daily from 9 am to 9 pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Volunteer hosts are on duty in the picnic area in the summer.

Trails

An extensive system of trails and forest roads are open year-round to non-motorized use. The 3,200 acre recreation area includes about 27 miles of system trails. These are multiple use trails and are available to hikers, folfers, mountain bikers, joggers, cross-country skiers and dog walkers. These trails and roads connect the University area and the Clark Fork River to the recreation area. The 3.4-mile Sam Braxton National Recreation Trail is located just south of the picnic area. In the winter, about 10 km of cross-country ski trails are maintained by the Forest Service and the Missoula Nordic Ski Club, a volunteer organization. Please keep pedestrian and dog traffic off the groomed trails in the winter.

Bicycles are restricted to designated system trails as shown on the map. Off trail bicycling, construction of jumps and/or other structures and user-built trails are prohibited.

Opportunities

- Picnicking
  - Mountain Biking
  - Jogging
  - Cross-country skiing
  - Restrooms (some handicapped accessible)
- Hiking
  - Folfing
  - Dog walking

Pattee Canyon Recreation Area



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For further information contact  
Missoula Ranger District  
Building 24A, Fort Missoula  
Missoula, MT 59804 • (406) 329-3814

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Missoula Ranger District  
Lolo National Forest



- Bicycles prohibited off designated open trails and on the face of Mount Sentinel
  - No motorized use
  - No folfing in the picnic area, in the winter on groomed ski trails or outside the posted open season
  - Day use only – no overnight camping
  - No pedestrians or dogs on groomed ski trails
  - Group picnics by permit only – call 329-3814
  - Shooting, firearms and fireworks prohibited
  - Campfires allowed only in provided facilities

Restrictions

- Are courteous, friendly and respectful to other visitors
  - Keep your bike on designated open routes
  - Do not build structures or new trails
  - Slow your bike when passing others
  - Control your dog
  - Pack out your dog's manure
  - Pack out more garbage than you brought
  - Use public restrooms
  - Keep off private property and out of closed areas

You can help reduce user conflicts if you:

- Learn to identify local weeds
- Pull 10 weeds every time you go out
- Check yourself and pets for weed seeds
- Prevent vegetation or soil damage
- Keep yourself and dogs on trails in heavily weed-infested areas

You can help prevent weeds if you:

Give back to the canyon